

Commentary on the Readings for November 6, 2016

The 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

All of the Readings for the remaining Sundays in Ordinary Time have as their theme *life, death* and *resurrection* of the human person not in a morbid or threatening way, but in a spirit of hope. This theme is appropriate for the weeks before the season of **Advent** because it causes us to think about our eventual death and preparedness. Once we get into the season of Advent and the holiday rush, we won't want to think much about death. Yet, the months of November and December are the two most dangerous months of the year because of weather conditions and our preoccupation with the coming holidays.

In the **First Reading** from the **Second Book of Maccabees (7:1-2, 9-14)**, we hear only part of the story about seven brothers who died at the hands of a Greek king who tried to force all Jews into accepting the Greek culture of Hellenism. These brothers would rather die than betray the God of Israel. Their faith gave them reassurance that fidelity to God's laws would be rewarded with salvation and resurrection which was a fairly recent concept for the Jews of that time; and only some of the Jews accepted it.

The **Responsorial Psalm** is (**17:1, 5-6, 8, 15**). We could say that the Psalmist is meditating on the same story and agreeing with the seven brothers. He offers the fidelity of the brothers as reason for being protected from faltering or failing. He prays that knowing God's faithfulness will help them through their ordeal and death; and upon awaking in heaven, they will be comforted by God's presence.

The **Second Reading** is from St. Paul's **Second Letter to the Thessalonians (2:16-3:5)**. At the time this letter was written, the anger of the Jews toward Paul was at a fever pitch, and he knew that his life was in danger. However, instead of seeking sympathy or pity, he counsels the people of Thessalonica to be strong and have courage even in the face of great oppression.

In the **Gospel Reading** from **Luke (20:27-38)**, we hear an interesting question being put to Jesus regarding a Mosaic Law. (Moses did make such a law. **See Deuteronomy 25:5**) Jesus' response lifts the Sadducees' understanding of heaven out of the earthly realm and into the spiritual where everything is perfect according to God's laws and there is no need of marriage. The question, of course, is really not about marriage but about the resurrection of mankind and life after death that the Sadducees did not believe. Jesus reminds them of what God said to Moses in the scene of the burning bush (Exodus **3:6**) about being the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, now long dead, but obviously spiritually alive in heaven. This passage should be reassuring to everyone because in Jesus' own words, there is a heaven for all who are faithful to the end.

In the above and subsequent readings this month, we are reminded of our own mortality and our need to look at where we are going, spiritually. So the question that arises is: **"Are you on the right track toward heaven or have you drifted in some other direction?"** Something to think about during your Prayer time this week!

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